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SHF

26 May 1969

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: French and British Nuclear Submarine Costs

1. The French nuclear ballistic missile submarine (SLBM) program will cost about four times as much as the comparable British program.

2. The French program for four nuclear powered ballistic missile submarines will cost an estimated four billion dollars and will be operational sometime after 1975.

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[REDACTED] These costs cover expenditures on research, development, test and evaluation, and construction. They exclude operating and maintenance costs.

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[REDACTED] Research and development costs amount to about two thirds of the total French program costs.

4. The French Ministry of Defense has urged the construction of a fifth submarine but it has not been authorized. A fifth Polaris submarine considered by the British in 1964 was dropped in 1965. It is estimated that a fifth submarine would cost the French about \$275 million.

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5. French budget documents underestimate the total cost of the submarine launched ballistic missile program. They state that the program will cost \$2.46 billion. This estimate is for a three submarine program. It does not include costs of the support system, reactors, cores, warheads, and much of the research and development for the first three submarines. The naval share of the Landes Missile Test Center and the SLBM share of the joint SLBM/IRBM missile costs are also excluded. Inclusion of these costs and the cost for the fourth submarine brings the estimated program cost for the SLBM program to \$4 billion. This figure excludes the naval portion of investment and operating costs for the Pacific Nuclear Test Center.



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7. French military thinking envisages the eventual use of nuclear attack submarines for the protection of the submarine missile force. The program has been in limbo for at least a year and is likely to be considerably postponed by budgetary restrictions.



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